face, crowned with the halo of their wide turban, and a throat panting with the effort just accomplished, together with their ballerina skirts flapping about their bare legs-- the general effect of all this at the foot of a rocky cliff makes a picture to tempt the brush of a Millet.

Section 7

Way of Life--Intellectual State--
Religious Ideas--Custom Relating to Birth, Marriage, and Death--Religious Ideas

The Meo likes his independence very much. However, he is less uncouth than the Man in his dealings with the French. It is not impossible to make a soldier of him and the creation of the small posts, linh co, of this race have been entirely successful. In 1904 about forty of them were incorporated into the "Tonkinese Tirailleurs" at Bao Lac, but this attempt gave less satisfactory results because of their antipathy to life in the barracks. In the future we should be satisfied with having them enter the police forces of the frontier.

The Meo, while somewhat crude, are not entirely without intelligence. A school was founded in March 1903 at the military post of Phobang, made up of young Meo and Lolo, and at the end of a year most of them, and especially the Lolo, already were reading correctly and were beginning to write little phrases in French. From this experiment one might at last conclude that these peoples are capable of a certain intellectual culture.

/141/ The Meo's method of living is of the simplest. His usual food is maize, he eats meat only on the occasion of festivities, but then he is not forbidden to eat the flesh of the dog, as are the Man. Maize is cooked by steaming. It is eaten at home with an abundance of vegetables, but for meals while traveling, or in the fields, small cakes are made of it. A porcelain spoon is the only instrument used in bringing food to the mouth.

Although the cultivation of the opium poppy is very widespread among the Meo, he uses very little of it himself. On the other hand, almost all smoke tobacco, either in a water pipe, or in a pipe similar to our own. The tobacco prepared by them looks like French tobacco, but is very much stronger. Neither men nor women chew betel. Far from lacquering their teeth, they take a certain pride in having them brilliantly white and go so far as to carry their tooth-brushes hanging from their neckloces.

/82/

7. Mental Development

A M 114 125 145 Unfortunately I was unable to test adequately either the children of the Akha or those of the Meau. A number of difficulties blocked this, especially the shortage of porters, which did not permit moving our test material. Moreover my test forms were designed for the mental world of primitives and could not be applied without further ado to a mountain people of Farther India with the mental capacity of the Akha, much less that of the Meau. It would have been necessary to revise my test forms, but we did not have the time to do this, especially since our funds were limited.

A M 157 856 According to our observations, however, the children of the Meau are more highly developed and surpass those of all the mountain tribes of Further India, including the Akha. Particularly striking among the Meau is a marked individualism, or rather a strong differentiation in comparison with the other tribes mentioned, which is already apparent even in small children. At the age of four or five distinct differences of character and talent are already evident. The Meau children begin

A M 153 856 to talk when they are one year old, those of the Akha somewhat later; at this age they are already able to say "father" and "mother" and a few other words. There are, however, some gifted children who speak even earlier and some without talent who are hardly this far at the age of two. One can say, however that at an average age of three and a half years the language of the children is almost equal to that of the adults.

At the age of two the children are not yet able to eat by themselves; they learn this during their third year. The

A M 153 861 157 Meau children begin asking questions at the age of five, those of the Akha at the age of six. The children of the Meau do not bother to think up explanations of their own for things that are unknown to them, but rather in each and every case ask their parents or other adults of their community, and in this respect they are decidedly vivacious and active. The children of the Akha are less persistent in this questioning than those of

/82 cont./

A M 153 861 [157] the Meau. If they do not receive an adequate or satisfactory answer, they soon go on to something else. They themselves never try to explain unfamiliar things; on the otherhand, /83/ with strangers they are more active and less self-conscious in their questioning than the Meau children, who, to be sure, are curious, but remain shyly in the background.

Most of the children ask many questions, but there are also some who ask few. They want an explanation for everything that is inexplicable to them. They ask why the trees grow, who makes the rice, what kind of spirits there are, why the dog barks, why the father goes hunting, why one hurts himself when he falls down, why birds fly, and so forth. The adults attempt to answer these questions truthfully and to the best of their ability, but sometimes they themselves are at a loss. If they are unable to answer a question, they say: "Oh, you already know more than I do, why do you ask me?"

A M 153 856 145 As far as learning ability is concerned, the Meau children, according to my observations, are extremely gifted; in my estimation, at least up to the age of six they are hardly less gifted than European children of the same age. The Akha children are somewhat less gifted. In all practical aspects and in the use of their bodies, the children of the Meau and Akha are more skillful and especially more perservering and much tougher than children of the Schan /Shan/ and Lao at the same age.

A M [871] Comparisons with European children in school could not be made, since in northern Thailand neither the Meau nor Akha children visit any schools. Besides, there were no European children there as a basis for comparison.

8. Art in the Life of Children

A M 857 [534] The musical instruments of the adults (see the chapter, "Art," section on "Music and Musical Instruments") are precious and are not given to the children. I could not find any instruments for children, not even any that could be regarded as relics on the path of the development of the art. At most it

/86 cont./

A M 145 125 592 [153] The self-criticism that the children exhibit even at an early age was surprising. Some Akha children about ten years old repeatedly refused to draw because "their lines did not look like the things they wanted to draw." In contrast, the really primitive people, the Phi Tong Luang (1), behaved quite

1. Bernatzik, IV, pp. 174 ff.

differently. Here even the adults scribbled for hours and then explained to me circumstantially what the lines, which in no instance went beyond the scribbling stage, were supposed to mean.

In conclusion it should be said that neither among the Meau nor the Akha did the talent for drawing disappear at a certain age, as we often find among European children (see also the chapter, "Art," the section on "Painting, Sculpture, Ornamentation," and the chapter, "Talent, Knowledge, Character, Morality, and Manners").

/87/ d) Sexual Development

A M 836 Among the Meau as well as among the Akha, unmarried young people enjoy extensive sexual freedom, which is documented by other authors for the Meau of other regions as well (1).

1. Eberhard II, pp. 253, 255, 256, 258, 261; also Chin. Repos., 14, p. 110.

M 864 [513] The children of the Meau, separated according to sex, sleep in their own sleeping quarters or at least in their own beds; only the small children sleep with their mothers. They therefore have no opportunity to gather experience by observing the adults. If they occasionally ask questions of a M [825] sexual nature, the adults answer truthfully, provided that the children are somewhat bigger. Small children, however, are

/461 cont./

577 aforementioned honesty which condemns lying to such an extent that it is not resorted to even if, in giving testimony, a father could thereby save his son, as I have already discussed in detail in the chapter, "Law and /462/ the Administration of Justice." 181 Considering their urge for freedom, the Meau can otherwise be 153 designated as thoroughly disciplined.

Moreover, they have both presence of mind and the 648 ability to make decisions, and are also very enterprising. While I was staying in northern Thailand in 1937, a group of about 100 Meau including men, women, and children quite unexpectedly [166] appeared in the Thailand city of Lampang. They indicated that they wanted to seek out new residence sites farther to the south. They were allowed to camp at the railway station, and after a week railway coaches were put at their disposal, and they were actually transported to the southwest where they were allotted new dwelling space in the mountains there. If one considers what it means for the Meau to descend into the hated valleys and, in addition, to venture into the city of a Thai people, one will be convinced that such enterprise and determination are not readily found among any of the other mountain peoples of Farther India.

181 The Meau face the tasks of life quite methodically, and 153 accordingly Savina (1) characterizes them: "Accustomed to

1. II, p. 185.

disentangling everything alone, a Meau never falls into difficulties." Marabail (2) comes to the following conclusion: "Whereas

2. Page 463.

the Man (Yau) is full of imagination and religion, the Meau is a materialist..."

/462 cont./

181 Their reaction to new impressions is remarkably quick,
[153] according to my observations, and stands in marked contrast to that of primitive peoples, as well as to that of the neighboring high-culture peoples, such as the Schan /Shan/ or Lao. In any case, it is established that in the case of the Meau there is no question at all of "primitives." Von Eickstedt (3), too, confirms

3. II, p. 57.

this: "These are no 'primitives.' On the contrary, they are a
[177] dislodged tribe with a unique culture definitely from China, but not typically Chinese, driven out by the true Chinese and most strongly influenced by them. These people have their own language and their own tradition."

152 It was interesting to observe the behavior of the Meau who
148 accompanied us into the cities of northern Thailand. Toward the Lao and Thai, they were by no means servile, but only modest, and yet proud /463/ and reserved. Impressed, Savina (1)

1. II, p. 184.

describes this pride of the Meau, which, interwoven with an episode, he depicts: "Once when we were traveling with some Meau and rested for a moment in a village of the Thai, whose inhabitants had a dispute with the Meau, great thirst tormented us. The Meau, however, preferred to walk another four kilometers rather than ask the Thai for a glass of water." How very
152 much the Meau, as true mountain people, suffer from homesickness when circumstances force them to leave their mountains was obvious even during the few days that they spent with me in the valleys. It is again Savina (2) who has also recorded this trait.

2. II, p. 177.

He tells of several Meau in a prison who would not eat and grew visibly emaciated. When asked the reason, they all answered: "We are thinking too much of our homes." A few days later, they were released and regained new strength immediately.

/470 cont./

177 not argue against their adaptability, for there is no proof that the Meau, who very carefully and seriously investigate even the most insignificant plant for its usefulness, and who therefore certainly thought about foreign methods of construction, regard the houses of foreign peoples in relation to their own as actually "more comfortable." Probably those houses would not conform as well to the way of life of the Meau.

821 "Far more limited than their knowledge of the world of animal and plants is that /471/ of minerals or celestial bodies [824] (see also the chapter, "Time-reckoning and Division of the Day"). It is strange that they do not think about the causes of natural phenomena, the change of seasons, the growth and decay of vegetation, in spite of the fact that in the mountain forests of northern Thailand these are very prominent. They behave in the same way toward rain, thunderstorms (on the other hand, on the significance of lightning, see the chapter, "Religion and Magic," the section, "Deities and Spirits"), and even comets and earthquakes, which are simple noted (I have reported on the eclipses of the sun and moon in the chapter-section just mentioned). The Meau estimate the diameter of the sun as ten fathoms in their linear measure, but in their view the moon is larger than the sun, about 20 fathoms in diameter, and the size of the stars varies, with their average diameter probably a fathom in size.

202 As has already been pointed out, the Meau have neither sign nor drum, whistle, secret, or women's language, and no writing of their own, but they do know individual signals for warning one another in case of danger. For example, three shots fired at short intervals or the rapid beating of a gong signify danger. These signals, however, are not used for matters of [724] war. In such cases organized arrangements are handled by messengers.

●153 The memory of the Meau is excellent. The Meau re- [675] member especially well everything that they have promised, which speaks very well for their character.